

Chapter Six: Public Input – Phase I

Section Two: Task Force Process, Studies and Analyses

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Public Input Meetings

The Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force conducted ten public input meetings throughout Arizona from May through September 1999 to elicit public comment regarding a long-term vision for statewide transportation. A schedule of these meetings is included in Appendix B. While encouraging public comment, the Task Force specifically requested comment in three primary areas corresponding to the Governor's Executive Order guiding the Task Force. These areas were (1) definition of statewide, long-term needs, resources and revenues, (2) governance, and (3) the planning and programming process.

Each public meeting followed the same general format. The co-chair(s) welcomed attendees, outlined the mission of the Task Force and invited public comment. A public comment form was made available and posed the following questions:

What is your vision for transportation 20 years from now and beyond?

What services or infrastructures do you believe need to be improved in order to meet the needs of your region (and the state as a whole) 20+ years from now? HOW?

Do you have suggestions of ways to fund improvements in services or infrastructure?

What are your priorities for transportation services or infrastructure improvements?

Are there additional issues or items you think the Task Force needs to consider?

Those attending the various meetings included local elected officials, staff members from state, regional and local governments, business representatives, the general public and the media. Several communities were represented at each public meeting, not merely representatives from the community in which the meeting was held.

Meetings were held in Yuma, Peoria, Tucson, Sierra Vista, Kingman, Flagstaff, Chandler, Payson, Phoenix, and Glendale. The following is a synthesis of approximately 30 hours of public meetings. A total of 456 people signed in at the ten public meetings. A total of 197 people presented verbal and written comments, supplementary materials and detailed documentation on a variety of topics.

Key issues raised at the public meetings are as follows:

Definition of Needs, Resources, and Revenues

Multiple speakers noted the need for increased revenues for transportation statewide. Urban and rural areas share common transportation needs: access to employment, services (e.g., education, and health care), shopping and recreation, as well as the need to move both passengers and freight in an efficient manner. Lengthy commutes are not limited to the urban areas. Comments in urban and rural areas also reflected basic differences on transportation issues. In the rural areas, access to enhanced commercial and cultural services in other communities and the metropolitan areas is critical. In the urban areas, efficient and effective traffic management is important. The urban areas also face increased congestion and air quality concerns. Speakers consistently noted issues of growth and economic development and the related impacts on transportation needs across the state. Safety is also noted as a critical need whether on high-speed freeways, at city intersections, or on rural roads.

A fully multimodal transportation system must include all aspects of multimodal planning including the traditional components of a multimodal system such as roads, public transit, air transportation and railroads, as well as other alternatives to these traditional means such as pipelines, electronic transmissions and telecommunications. The various transportation entities throughout the state rely on a wide

variety of funding sources. While there was no universal agreement on appropriate new funding mechanism(s), many speakers did support increased funding. Speakers noted the need to look to other states and countries for ideas.

Several communities suggested developing funding and planning partnerships. Such partnerships might include: inter-agency partnerships at the state level among ADOT, the Department of Public Safety (DPS); as well as inter-jurisdictional partnerships, among the state, cities, counties, towns, regional planning agencies, including the Councils of Governments (COGs) and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and other public/private partnerships.

The most frequent aviation-related comment from communities was that all flight fund property tax revenues should be dedicated to the state aviation fund.

Overall, transportation system maintenance is critical to local communities whether roadway maintenance, maintenance of transit fleet equipment including wheel-chair lifts and bicycle racks, and/or automated message signs.

Transit is critical to both urban and rural areas. Urban areas are looking for comprehensive systems that meet a wide variety of regional needs. Systems cited included fixed route, Dial-A-Ride, collectors, light rail transit. Rural areas are searching for ways to develop and implement basic services and to provide connections to urban areas. Task Force participants recognize the necessity to plan for an aging population that desires to retain mobility even when no longer driving.

Alternate modes of transportation are important to both urban and rural areas including bicycling, pedestrian paths, carpooling, equestrian trails, etc.

Rail service, both passenger and freight, is important to the State, and some communities are concerned about intermodal freight capabilities.

Some speakers noted the increased availability and need for use of changing technologies e.g., Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), alternate fuels, telecommunications, etc. The inter-relationships of land use, air quality and transportation are all important issues. Coordination with other planning processes, such as Growing Smarter, is of key importance.

Many communities noted the importance of giving ADOT the resources needed to meet their mandates, and the need to pay ADOT employees competitive wages. Several speakers complimented ADOT staff on their work, particularly at the local district level.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the CANAMEX corridor (connecting Mexico and Canada) are impacting many portions of the State and present transportation challenges in terms of planning, programming, funding, and enforcement. This impact will increase as the CANAMEX corridor becomes fully developed. Many communities are seeking creative ways to effectively meet the demands of increased truck traffic directly related to NAFTA.

Seasonal populations serve an important economic mainstay for many Arizona communities, and yet, present a transportation challenge for service delivery and funding allocations.

The need for substantial educational efforts concerning state transportation issues was identified. The need to educate voters and residents statewide of overall transportation needs and importance of increased funding to meet those needs were specifically mentioned as well as the need to educate the legislature. Additionally, there is a need to promote the usage of alternate modes of transportation.

Governance Issues

With regard to the State Transportation Board, the comments generally reflected the difference in urban versus rural interests, with rural areas wanting to retain the existing structure and the urban areas seeking increased representation on the board. Some speakers noted that the board functions well as it is, while others identified problems with its current operations. Increased

coordination with other state agencies, such as State Lands, DPS, and the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) (for rail & pipeline issues) is needed. Several legislative changes will be required.

Many local jurisdictions want increased authority to impose new funding, planning and implementation mechanisms along with increased flexibility in how they use existing funding, such as the use of gas tax for transit. Numerous comments concerning the relationships among and the responsibilities of the MPOs, COGs, local governments and the state, including the Transportation Board and ADOT were received.

Many local jurisdictions, especially the counties, are seeking more authority over land use issues.

Planning and Programming Issues

Speakers expressed strong support and need for: local involvement in planning; decentralization of decision-making within ADOT; more authority for district engineers; stronger ADOT multimodal planning; and strong regional cooperation. Many speakers noted that ADOT has made major improvements in communication, but also noted that a further increase in communication and coordination are needed.

Communities want to retain their unique qualities. They need flexibility from ADOT in

planning and implementing transportation improvements in order to retain those qualities.

Other Public Comments

In addition to the ten public input meetings held by the Task Force throughout the state, public input and comment have been solicited through a variety of other means. The Task Force has established a website within the ADOT website (www.dot.state.az.us), and can be contacted by e-mail at vision21@dot.state.az.us. In addition, public input comment forms have been available at all public meetings for submission of written materials to the Transportation Vision 21 Task Force, 206 S. 17th Ave., 320 B, Phoenix, AZ 85007.

Through these means, as well as ongoing meetings with interested groups and individuals, the Task Force has received approximately two hundred items of additional input concerning the transportation system in Arizona.

More complete information concerning comments received during the public input meetings and those with interested groups and individuals may be reviewed at the Task Force's office.